CHAPTER V

Boise Junior College had its most dramatic growth in periods of international stress. It originated, under the church, during the low point of the worldwide depression. It became a public institution in the first year of World War II in September of 1939, and moved onto its new campus one month prior to the opening date of the Selective Service. Since the College was two-thirds male at this time, it was almost immediately affected by worldwide problems. It never had the opportunity as an institution to develop in anything akin to normal national and world conditions.

In spite of World War II, a bond election was passed on November 14, 1939, making a campus site and buildings possible. Thus with war imminent, the problem of building a campus and at the same time assisting the young men who were rapidly being inducted into the service of their country, the College had a mixture of its own problems plus those of the young men who, before Pearl Harbor, were debating how they might best serve the nation should war come.

Immediately after the passing of the bond election, the College had three and a half months to complete the design of its buildings, work out financing with the depression-born Work Projects Administration, and provide student facilities for physical education, a student union, classrooms, and an auditorium for the newly created college. Also, the initial campus construction must be completed to meet the deadline of returning St. Margaret's Hall to the church in the fall of 1940.

The contract for the Administration Building was let on March 4, 1940 to J. O. Jordan & Son¹ and construction began three days later on March 7.

A group of 500 Boiseans, junior college students, and faculty members attended a ground breaking ceremony Thursday morning for the new Boise Junior College Administration Building.

President Eugene B. Chaffee at the controls of a steam shovel, lifted the first shovel of dirt from the excavation.

J. J. Chapman of the junior college trustees was Master of Ceremonies. Talks on the progress of the college during the last year were made by Chapman, Senator E. D. Baird, and President Chaffee. Plans for the new campus and buildings were outlined by F. K. Hummel, architect in charge of construction.²

There had been a question about the location of the Administration Building. Some wanted it facing the major boulevard—Capitol—which joined the State Capitol at the north end with Platt Garden and the new railroad depot at the south end of what had become known as Capitol Boulevard. It was quickly pointed out by those interested, that a campus facing Capitol Boulevard would restrict the development of the campus since the area between Owyhee Street (College Boulevard) and the river was only some 550 feet in depth. This would mean that the rest of the buildings would be stacked up behind the Administration Building for a length of one mile over to Broadway Avenue. Such planning would mean that the heart of the campus—the Administration Building—would be far away from other sections.

It seemed logical to locate this major building near the center of the campus and face it toward the mountains at direct right angles to a line to the highest peak—Shafer Butte. The line to this peak was at right angles to the tangent of the major curve in the river which would form a major axis. An additional

advantage was that the sewer line was available within one hundred yards of where the Administration Building would be set. This would not have been possible in any other major location. Likewise, connections to central water systems could be placed within five hundred feet of the Administration Building and most of the major buildings which would be built in the center of the campus.

As a result, everyone seemed satisfied with the central selection, since each had had an opportunity to express his desire in the newspapers during the intervening time between the election in March creating the District and the one in the following November authorizing the bonds for the buildings.

An allotment for changing the old airport into a campus through a W.P.A. grant of \$57,7003 made it possible to spread top soil from desert land on the Bench (some four miles from the campus) to the central 20 acres of the campus. Nothing but gravel existed here since it had been formerly a series of eight to ten islands which had been filled with gravel in 1928 to make a runway for the city airport running west-northwest where nothing but sloughs and the islands had existed. This top soil made possible the development of lawns in the central area.

This landscaping was accompanied by a W.P.A. grant providing labor to build sidewalks, roads, and curbs. When the College moved to its new site on September 4, 1940, there were no paved roads as we know them now, merely a dirt road along the south side of the campus and a dike along the north edge adjoining the Boise River. The only paved roads were two four-lane highways on each end—Capitol Boulevard and Broadway Avenue. The road now paralleling the river did not exist; it was just a gravel dike restricting the river within its banks. This was widened to 65 feet so that a sidewalk along the river would be included in building the present Campus Road on top of the widened dike. This can truly be called a rock bottom college since for years the site had been waste land and river channels that were filled with gravel when the airport was constructed.

These first years of the public junior college were years of stabilization and of building solid security while the world was engaged in a world war that threatened many existing institutions. The College truly enjoyed only one semester on the new campus before it was violently affected by the draft which took most of the young male students. The student body that had risen to 619 in 1940-41 from 459 the year before, slumped within two years to about 200 students, principally young women except for 68 men, most of whom were deferred by the selective service because of some physical defect that made them rejects for military service.

There was no water source for the College until an inch and a half pipeline was laid in the area of the Administration Building by the contractors at the time they began this first college structure in March of 1940. Three months before America entered World War II, the College was still operating on this limited water supply, but was able to anticipate a "freezing" on a new six-inch line by a few days—mid-October, 1941. Had this not been accomplished, there would have been little protection against fire during the next five war years; the inch and a half line would have been entirely inadequate for fire protection for campus structures.

The securing of this flow of water was not a simple affair. The dividing line between the county and the city ran right down the corridor of the new Administration Building, extending westward to the intersection of old Owyhee Street (now a part of College Boulevard) and Brady Street. This divided status required an agreement between the city and county with the Boise Water Company. The latter agreed to lay the six-inch line connecting the one of similar size at Bellevue and Lincoln with two four-inch lines, one running from Capitol Boulevard east down Owyhee Street for some two blocks and the other running down the alley at the back of Owyhee Street and merging with the new six-inch line at the point where Owyhee, Brady, and College Avenue met. The president of the College received outstanding cooperation from

the City Council, the County Commissioners, and the Boise Water Company to provide this necessary fire protection.

Students attending this first year on the new campus remember the gravel and mud that existed in the thousand-footlong parking area paralleling the sidewalk on the south side of the new Administration Building. Cooperation had to be the spirit of the day between faculty and students, since no one was sure that he in his car might not become immobile at the next stroke of the engine.

Building the heating plant was another W.P.A. project. The heating tunnel and plant from the present heating source to the Administration Building, had a race with time for completion prior to ensuing cold weather in late September of 1940. The tunnel was not fully installed and covered by a walk until mid-October, though heat was available by September 21st. The architects' original plans had called for a tunnel paralleled by a sidewalk, but when Architect Frank Hummel indicated to President Chaffee that, because of the water table some three feet below the surface grade, it would be impossible to grow any grass over the top of the tunnel, the depth for the tunnel became a real problem. Chaffee suggested that a fivefoot walk on top of the tunnel might be the answer to both problems—it would allow the tunnel to have a higher roof and would eliminate a probable dead grass area caused by heat from the tunnel. This policy was adopted and extended to every building which followed on the central campus, including the walk from the heating plant to the Student Union at the corner of Lincoln and Bellevue in 1967. This solution proved to be extremely practical in all the years that followed as it meant that the walking surface of these sidewalks would always be free of snow and ice during the winter.

The College had money for an Administration-Classroom Building through the \$260,000 voted for it in the previous bond election of November 14, 1939. This, plus (1) a premium on bonds, (2) cash transfers of \$28,000 from the general fund, and

(3) sale of land, resulted in \$294,000 of District funds. A favorable bid and furnishings for the Administration Building took \$185,000, leaving some \$110,000 for all of the other things needed.

Other facilities badly needed on the campus were a gymnasium and auditorium. There was much discussion about whether these should be in a single building or in two separate buildings. Finally, it seemed wiser to settle for two buildings and get assistance from the Federal Government through the W.P.A. In a Board of Trustee's meeting of July 23, 1940, "The Architect was authorized to advertise for bids on the construction of a temporary gymnasium at the estimated cost of \$7,500. The present plans contemplate using the old Webb Hangar as a basis for such construction." 5

On August 7, the Board "Authorized its President, Mr. O. O. Haga, to act on behalf of the Board in the matter of opening and considering bids for the construction of a temporary gymnasium and for furnishing building materials for the assembly hall. Said bids are to be opened at 8:00 p.m. on August 15, 1940."6

On that date the bids were opened and found too high; the lowest by Kloepfer and Cahoon was \$8,600. On August 21, the Board "Authorized Architect Frank K. Hummel to prepare plans, estimates, and the necessary documents for the submission of an application to the W.P.A. for the construction of a temporary gymnasium building."

One month later on September 19, "The Board of Trustees approved the action of its officers in having executed an application for Government aid through the Work Projects Administration on the construction of a gymnasium estimated to cost as follows:

W.P.A. share	\$14,386.00
District share	7,229.00
Total estimated cost	\$21,615.00 ⁸

The actual cost of this building as indicated on page 9 of the Report of Audit from January 15, 1940 to September 22, 1943 by Middleton, McCarty & Company, Accountants and Auditors, was a total cost of \$24,245.00, with the W.P.A. spending the amount anticipated above, but with the District having to pay an additional \$2,600.00.

Compared to modern college building expenses this seems like a pittance, but during wartime in an era emerging from an international depression, while this appeared reasonable enough, it indicated with what care the College board and administration were proceeding in these difficult depression and war days.

The \$24,245.00 was used to enlarge the old Webb Hangar which still stands on the campus near the intersection of Michigan Street and Bellevue Avenue. The roof of this hangar was raised some eight feet and the structure extended to the north to accommodate a regulation playing court for basketball, 100 feet by 60 feet, a dressing room for men, and showers. The seating for spectators was provided by parallel benches. The whole structure was completed in August of 1941 with connecting walks from the Gymnasium to the Administration Building. An independent coal-fired furnace furnished the heat. This served as a gymnasium for over 15 years, that is, until 1957 when it was remodeled again and made into an auto mechanics building. It is still used in that capacity.

Some 53.4% of the Auditorium was financed through W.P.A. This had to be worked out through the State W.P.A., followed by national approval of the State's recommendation. The latter approval was transmitted to the College by a telegram from Senator D. Worth Clark in which he said, "Glad to advise President Roosevelt has approved of W.P.A. project to construct assembly hall for B.J.C. Amount \$35,471." The telegram arrived on March 7, 1940, the same day that construction began on the Administration Building.

The new Auditorium had a stage and practice rooms across the east end and lounges and toilet facilities across the west end. These two appendages formed the cross section of a Block "I" on each end of the assembly room. The total cost of this building was \$88,675; \$47,969 furnished by the W.P.A. and \$40,706 furnished by the College. The building had a super structure of reinforced concrete, faced by the dark red Salt Lake brick, the same type as used for the Administration Building. The stone trim to match the pre-cast stone on the Administration Building was constructed by W.P.A. labor on the campus.

Because of the involvement on the part of the United States in World War II, and the improvement of economic conditions, the W.P.A. was approaching its period of termination. The termination occurred prior to the completion of the Auditorium. The ceiling and some of the trim work was placed in the building by members of the faculty and administration during the Christmas vacation of 1941. The stage was completed so short a time before Foreign Language Night that it was necessary to perform the plays without curtains. Curtains and other accessories were added in the spring and summer of 1942.

The Auditorium proved to be one of the most versatile buildings on the campus—the only one large enough to hold the usual audience and the only one that could accommodate the pipe organ when that gift was received a decade later. During the years the College was at St. Margaret's Hall, graduation exercises were held on the lawn in front of that building. When the College left that location the new campus was not quite ready for occupancy and in 1941 the exercises were held in Julia Davis Park in front of the Band Shell. From 1942 to 1955 inclusive, all graduation exercises were held in the new Auditorium.

The College location in the early forties was regarded as somewhat remote. There were no large stores or eating places near the campus. In the latter category there was the old, deserted Airway Inn, which stood on the east end of the campus at the present location of Christ Chapel, almost three quarters of a mile from the classrooms. There were no proper sidewalks and

only mediocre gravel roads connecting the center of the campus with the east end. The president suggested the rental of the Airway Inn to the Board of Trustees and after gaining approval, secured an operator for it. The distance from classroom to food service never made this area a desirable one.

Finally, following the registration period in 1940, a general discussion developed through an earlier proposal by President Chaffee, on the possible financing of a student union building. President Haga of the Board of Trustees designated Chaffee to head a committee of interested citizens. This committee came up with the proposal that private bonds be sold to citizens of the community to provide the money for building the student union. The bonds were to be paid off by profits from the fountain and meal service at the union, plus about \$700 a year to be paid in successive years by the student body from fees for a student center.

Hummel, Hummel, and Jones designed the new building which was composed of a dining room 60 by 30 feet with a soda fountain at the south side; a kitchen 30 by 30 feet adjacent to the fountain and dining room; two lounges with fireplaces, one on either side of the main entrance; and an apartment just above these lounges which provided a residence for the union manager. Bids were awarded on August 22, 1941 at a cost of \$22,937; the low bidder being the L. S. Mallory Construction Company. The building was located on a parcel of land 150 by 175 feet and placed on a cross-campus road some 125 feet north of the Auditorium then also under construction.

In addition to the contract, there were the architect's fees, electrical fees, and the cost of the heating tunnels which all totaled up to \$24,742. Equipment to furnish the building cost \$3,759 and the soda fountain, a used one purchased from another Boise contractor, cost \$2,700, making a combined total of around \$30,000.11 Assets from Boise Junior College Inc., covered the cost of the furniture. This came mainly from

the sale by Boise Junior College Inc., of library books and equipment to the Boise Junior College District.

That winter the corner stone was laid and the Union was opened for regular college use the first of April 1942. At first it was referred to by the students as "The Corral"—a place to roundup broncos. This name was later dropped and the building was simply called the Student Union Building. It proved invaluable during the war years and immediately after as the student center. Here, students and faculty not only ate their meals, but had committee meetings, played cards, and held their social functions. It became the center of spontaneous student meetings and pep-rallies and many square dances were held here in the evenings by the faculty. The bonds to finance the building were retired each year on the due date; the final payment being made October 11, 1956.

In 1950, an addition of two stories was added with the first floor accommodating large banquet groups and the regular dormitory residents, and the second floor, a 70 by 50 foot ballroom.

That same year, Miss Hattie Gesner came to the College as the manager of the Student Union Building and its food service. Prior to joining the College she had managed university food services and many metropolitan department store lunch and tea rooms. She did an outstanding management job at Boise Junior College until her retirement in 1962. Her work at the College, ably assisted by Miss Mildred Cecil, involved more than outstanding food preparation for students; she was tremendously interested in the welfare of the students away from home for the first time. A chat with "Hattie and Shorty" was a must with many returning alumni.

For twenty-five years the Student Union served as the principal area for social functions of both students and faculty. In the fall of 1967, all activity was transferred to the new Student

Union at Lincoln and Bellevue Streets. Today, the building which once served as the student base is used for music classes, practice rooms, and the College health center. The old ballroom on the second floor has become the Sub-al Theatre for College plays and other dramatic performances.

⁵Board of Trustees Meeting, Boise Junior College District. Minutes, July 23,

⁶Ibid, August 7, 1940. ⁷Ibid, August 21, 1940. ⁸Ibid, September 19, 1940.

⁹Middleton, McCarty & Co., op.cit. p. 14.

¹Board of Trustees Meeting, Boise Junior College District. Minutes, March 4

²Idaho Daily Statesman, March 8, 1940. ¹⁸Middleton, McCarty & Co. Boise Junior College District Construction Fund, Report of Audit from January 15, 1940 to September 22, 1943, p. 14. 4Ibid, August 21, 1940.

¹⁰ Board of Trustees Meeting, Boise Junior College, Inc. Minutes, August 22,

¹¹ Middleton, McCarty & Co. Boise Junior College, Inc., Report of Audit as at August 10, 1943.